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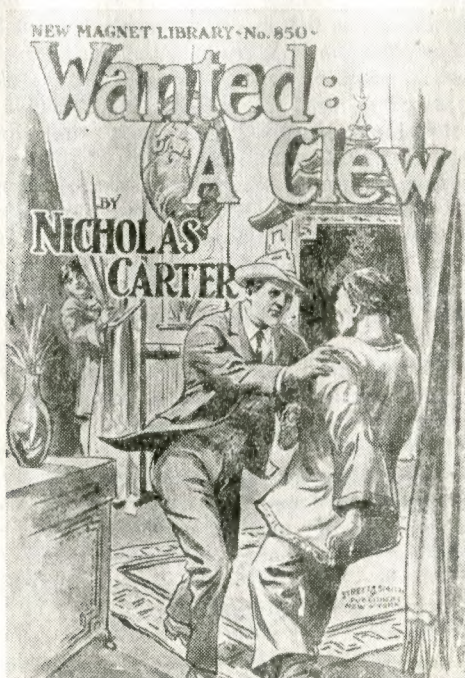
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Joseph E. Badger's Dime Novels About Joaquin Murieta

By James L. Evans



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Joseph E. Badger's Dime Novels About Joaquin Murieta

By James L. Evans
Pan American University

Joaquin Murieta is the most noted and the most notorious bandit of California history even though both the name and the characteristics of the bandit are perhaps fictitious.

For numerous reasons, in the early 1850's much of the lawlessness of the California Gold Rush days was blamed on persons of Mexican descent. Among these reason were Anglo prejudice against Mexicans, resentment of Mexicans' success in the mines, hostility against Mexico from whom the U.S. had taken California in the recent war, the existence of the stereotype of the Mexican as a bandit, and the Mexicans' skill in horsemanship which enabled them to leave a scene quickly. In the winter of 1852-53 rumors began to circulate that much robbery and killing was done by an outlaw band led by a bandit named Joaquin. The fact that these crimes were committed almost simultaneously at places far apart failed to convince the masses that no man, whether named Joaquin or anything else, could have participated in all of them; instead it caused them to believe that Joaquin headed large numbers of lesser bandits. In May 1853 the California state legislature gave in to public demands and assigned a posse to capture Joaquin within ninety days. This posse, which many persons believed was nothing other than a group of worthless outlaws, went searching; shortly before their time had expired, they killed a Mexican, said he was Joaquin, and collected their reward.

The following year a California journalist with aspirations to be a writer of both poetry and fiction produced a book entitled "The Life and Adventures of Joaquin Murieta: The Celebrated California Bandit." This journalist was John Rollin Ridge, who was part Cherokee Indian. Though Ridge contended that his novel had a factual basis, later scholars have generally agreed that Ridge "created a story out of pure cloth." I personally believe that Ridge's book was the result of his having read about the crimes reported in the "Alta California" of 1853 (which I have also read), of things he remembered about mistreating the Cherokees during his childhood, and of his own creative literary talents. According to Ridge's novel, Joaquin was an innocent, almost naive, youth of eighteen who came from Mexico to California to mine for gold. He brought along his young and ultra-pure mistress. After Joaquin suffered repeated mistreatment from men who called themselves Americans, Joaquin decided to spend his life getting revenge. First, he got vengeance on those specific individuals who had falsely accused him of horse stealing and had publicly lashed him; then he sought revenge against Americans as a whole and robbed and killed them in great numbers.

In 1859 the "California Police Gazette" published a ten-part serialized

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work entitled "The Life of Joaquin Murieta," and the "Gazette" later issued the story in pamphlet form. The "Gazette" added a few details to Ridge's story, especially about Joaquin's early life; it made some changes, mostly regarding his mistress. The content of the "Gazette" narrative, but not the wording, was essentially the same as that of the Ridge story.

Since 1859 the story of Joaquin has been told and retold. Most of these versions were adapted from the Ridge story or from the "Gazette" version (which had been adapted from the Ridge version). There have been dramas about Joaquin written as early as the 1850s and as recently as the 1970s. There have been booklength poems, and there have been endless newspaper accounts often based on interviews with persons who supposedly knew Joaquin. In the 1900s there have been Joaquin novels with such titles as "A Plaything of the Gods," "The Crimson Trail of Joaquin Murieta," "The Dream Ends in Fury," and "The Robin Hood of El Dorado." And there have been three movies about Joaquin.

Among the many things that have perpetuated the Joaquin story are dime novels by Joseph E. Badger, Jr. This prolific and popular dime novelist wrote about five hundred dime novels for Beadle and Company. After writing many stories in the 1870s that dealt with the West and Mexico, Badger used the theme of Joaquin in some of his works in the 1880s.

Biographical material about Badger is limited, but Albert Johannsen says that Badger spent much of his growing-up years in Kansas along a path to the West and that Badger's father and two uncles made a trip to California during the gold mining days. Surely the father, who did not remain in California, heard the traditional tales about Joaquin, and possibly he supplied his son with accounts that years later led to dime novels about Joaquin.

Badger touched on the legend in several of his dime novels, and he has three in the Beadle Dime Library series that deal entirely with the Joaquin story. These are 1) "Joaquin, The Saddle King: A Romance of Joaquin's First Fight," 2) "Joaquin, The Terrible: The True History of the Three Bitter Blows That Changed an Honest Man to a Merciless Demon," and 3) "The Pirate of the Placers; or, Joaquin's Death-Hunt."

Perhaps Badger's major contribution concerning the Joaquin legend is that his writings were read in the East. Before then, most of the deluge of books and articles and oral accounts about Joaquin had appeared in West Coast publications and had been read mostly in California where the story of Joaquin was already known, or had been written in Spanish and published and circulated in the Spanish-speaking world outside the U.S.

Naturally Badger's dime novels were read mostly in the Eastern U.S. Thus, his novels did a tremendous amount to circulate the Joaquin story there. Joseph Badger basically follows the Ridge and "Police Gazette" versions of the early part of Joaquin's life. Certainly Badger does not contradict the Ridge and "Police Gazette" versions.

I shall briefly discuss Badger's three dime novels that deal primarily with Joaquin, and I shall comment on how Badger used the Joaquin legend and how he elaborated on it.

The original Ridge story is about 50,000 words; the "Police Gazette" version is about 60,000 words; each of Badger's three dime novels, though dealing with only a very limited portion of the Joaquin story, runs to more than 70,000 words.

Both the Ridge story and the "Gazette" version make references to Joaquin prior to his arrival in California, and both give chronological accounts of Joaquin until after the posse members kill someone who they claim is Joaquin.

Nearly all other accounts, whether written in the 1870s or 1970s, also begin their story before Joaquin's arrival in California and continue it until after his end.

Dime Library #154 was entitled "Joaquin, The Saddle King" and appeared in early 1881. It deals with Joaquin's skilled horsemanship and the results of it prior to his arrival in California. The Ridge story tells practically nothing about Joaquin's early life in Mexico, other than to say that he was "born in the province of Sonora of respectable parents and educated in the schools of Mexico." Ridge says that as a youth Joaquin was peaceful and of "generous and noble nature." Eager to escape the unstable conditions in his country, Joaquin came to California with his young mistress. The "Police Gazette" story originated the idea that when young, Joaquin had worked in Mexico City in the stables of Santa Ana, where Joaquin's superiority in horsemanship had caused the jealousy and resentment among co-workers that prompted Joaquin to leave the Mexican capital and return to his native and peaceful Sonora. The "Police Gazette" summarizes these events in about 300 words, but the brief account has been retained in most versions of the story. In "Joaquin, The Saddle King, Badger takes the three-hundred word account and uses it as the basis for most incidents of the entire 70,000-word dime novel. In the "Police Gazette," an older co-worker named Senor Camplido insulted Joaquin about his horsemanship, and the two decided to compete in feats of skill. After Camplido cleared a high adobe wall on horseback, Joaquin attempted to do the same. But just as Joaquin neared the wall, one of Camplido's followers lowered a handkerchief in the face of Joaquin's horse, frightening it and causing it to hit the wall. There was no injury except to Joaquin's pride, but Joaquin then decided to leave Mexico City. Joaquin returned home to Sonora, later married, and still later came to California. We hear nothing more of his life in the capital of Mexico. The name Camplido is mentioned only two times in the "Police Gazette," and there is no mention of why he insulted Joaquin about his horsemanship. In "Joaquin, The Saddle King" the incident and its aftereffects make up 70,000 words. Also Badger tells us that although Camplido made the insults because he simply did not like Joaquin, the man commented on the way Joaquin had mounted his horse and Joaquin had replied that he mounted the American way. Badger then tells the reader that during the Mexican War, Joaquin had fought in Texas on the side of the U.S. and had learned much about horses from Americans in Texas. This detail about Joaquin's being in the American army in Texas is an interesting one added by Badger. I have encountered no reference to it in the innumerable other accounts I have read, but then the other accounts do not give details of Joaquin's earlier years. If Badger accepts the usual ideas regarding Joaquin's age, Joaquin would have been in his early teens while serving in the U.S. army. In "The Saddle King," Camplido was portrayed as a good horseman but a coward who had been forced to resign from his position of command in the Mexican War. Camplido was still very wealthy and owned a large estate and cattle and horses by the thousands. Why he was employed as a common groomsman in the stables is not explained in the story. In "The Saddle King," as soon as Camplido makes his sneer at Joaquin's mounting—in the very beginning of the story—the two men agreed to compete in horsemanship. After much competition in which both did equally well, Camplido jumped a high and broad wall, and Joaquin intended to do the same. Just as Joaquin got near the wall, an associate of Camplido flashed "a gaudy red scarf" near the horse, distracting it. Rocks fell, and the horse fell to a chasm far below. Only fate—and the author's need to continue the story—saved

Joaquin's life. Joaquin decided to leave the job. He also considered leaving the area, but he had recently met and fallen in love with a young girl named Carmela, the daughter of a wealthy rancher who lived nearby. Her father had said that he would kill her rather than let her marry beneath her station—and Joaquin was an ordinary cowboy with neither position nor property. Also, the father had already agreed with the older Camplido that Carmela would marry him. Really the father did not care much for Camplido, but Carmela's older brother Luis was under Camplido's influence. To save Carmela from Joaquin, her father and brother decided to send her to semi-permanent seclusion at an aunt's house two days' journey away—but an elderly retainer on the estate told Carmela and Joaquin of these plans and offered to help Joaquin rescue her by ambush along the way. The reader is now in only the fifth of the twenty-seven chapters of the dime novel. Nearly all of twenty-one of the remaining twenty-two chapters tell of the endless series of events involving Camplido and his followers, Joaquin and his followers, and Carmela's father and his followers. In these pages Joseph Badger uses typical devices found in Western dime novels to add to the excitement and suspense and to prolong the story—men are shot, horses are shot, a girl uses a dagger with incredible skill, long-lost friends and long-lost enemies return, characters that the reader and other characters had thought to be fatally wounded suddenly reappear, lassos appear out of nowhere and encircle a person's or horse's neck, Apaches who are really white men in disguise make a raid, a good guy has a chance to kill the enemy but does not do so because only the enemy knows where Carmela is hidden and tied without food or water. There is certainly plenty of action. There is also the sudden appearance of Josefa, a semi-barboic girl who loves Joaquin, kills a man to save Joaquin's life, and makes futile yet insistant demands that Joaquin marry her.

When Joseph Badger had nearly used up his quota of words, he quickly concluded the story. Then the brother Luis learned that Camplido, not Joaquin, had fired the shot thought to have been fatal to Carmela's father, who was still alive after all. The father, though "hot tempered and very proud," was "just and generous" and changed his views toward Joaquin. This change in his attitude is credible—mostly because he had learned that his son Luis "was no fit guardian" for Carmela. At the wedding ceremony, just after Joaquin and Carmela were pronounced man and wife, a person in disguise appeared. It was Josepha, who gave herself a fatal stab. And before the ceremony ended, Carmela's father fatally collapsed. We are told that not long afterwards the young couple went to Joaquin's home in Sonora where they were happy for a year. In his concluding sentence Badger says that his purpose was to show "what Joaquin Murieta WAS, before he was driven to the bad." In reality, however, the author tells what Joaquin did and what happened around him, not what he was like.

Thus, a few words and ideas from the "Police Gazette" version and nearly all later versions, contained an idea that Badger developed into an entire 70,000 word dime novel. Practically nothing created by Badger in "The Saddle King" appeared in earlier or later versions of the Joaquin story. But by saying that these are events of Joaquin's early life before he came to California, Joseph Badger in this dime novel in no way contradicts events in the usual story of Joaquin. This dime novel is simply a filling in of events before the usual story begins. The events given by Badger in "The Saddle King" are as exciting and unbelievable as those in any dime novel laid in Mexico. Those events are possible, however.

The second of Badger's dime novels about Joaquin to be published and the second in chronological order is "Joaquin, The Terrible; The True History

of the Three Bitter Blows That Changed an Honest Man to a Merciless demon." It is DL #165 and came out in later 1881. The account of the three blows is a crucial one in every story of Joaquin. Within the first two percent of the Ridge story (and most other versions), the innocent Joaquin not only had come to California to prosper and to enjoy being among the Americans whom he then loved, but also had suffered three blows. According to Ridge, the Americans first drove him from his mining claim because he was Mexican, bound him hand and foot, and "ravished his mistress before his eyes." Second, after the couple had moved to a little farm, they were driven from it because, according to Americans who took the farm, he was "an infernal Mexican intruder." Joaquin moved again. The third blow came the day Joaquin was with his half-brother. Americans erroneously said their horses were stolen, hanged the brother, and publically lashed Joaquin. At that instant Joaquin changed; he swore that he would live for revenge, first revenge on those who had mistreated him and then on Americans in general. In most stories of Joaquin the accounts of the three blows are summarized briefly with no details, and then the stories deal in detail with Joaquin's life of crime. In the "Police Gazette" version, Americans first hanged Joaquin's half-brother and a helper for stealing horses that Joaquin and the brother had recently purchased, next knocked Joaquin "senseless with the butts of their pistols" and "ravished and murdered" his wife before his eyes; they later accused Joaquin of horse theft, tied him to a tree, and publicly lashed him. In the dime novel we have about fifty thousand words of intrigue and excitement before the first of the three blows. In it, a man using the name John Vanderslice operates a gambling hall in California; he is eager to torture and later kill a very successful gambler whom he thinks is Joaquin Murieta and to get Joaquin's wife. This John Vanderslice was really Manuel Camplido of "Joaquin, The Saddle King." But the man he sought was not really Joaquin; it was Joaquin's brother Carlos who looked like Joaquin. Also, the outlaw Raymon Salcedo had once lost his lover to Joaquin's brother Carlos and was eager to capture and keep Carlos' wife who had refused him. In most stories of Joaquin, we learn practically nothing about the brother except that he was unjustly hanged for horse theft, and usually we do not even know that the brother had a wife. But in Badger's dime novel we get lengthly and detailed intrigue; like material in many dime novels, it holds the reader's interest, but it is quite involved, and the events are possible but highly improbable. About 85% of the way through the dime novel, we read about the first blow. Joaquin's brother was accused of stealing the horse he was riding and was hanged from a tree. We get the account in detail.

The second blow came when Joaquin was accused of stealing a horse. After learning that Joaquin feared the lash more than the noose, several men publicly lashed him. Though public lashings were somewhat common in early California, a man guilty or even accused of stealing a horse was ordinarily hanged. But since hanging or any other kind of execution would have eliminated Joaquin and thus ended the story, Badger says that several men chose to lash Joaquin because they knew he feared the lash more than he feared hanging. A few days later Joaquin was beaten up, and his wife was "ravished." While ravishing her, the culprit John Vanderslice (who was really Camplido), removed his fake beard so that Joaquin's wife would recognize him. The weak Joaquin asked his weaker wife who had ravished her first. She told him it was Camplido; then "her soul fled"; and Joaquin made a vow of revenge that "was to cause both innocent and guilty blood to flow in rivers!"

The third Badger dime novel about Joaquin is Dime Library #201, published in early 1882; it is entitled 'The Pirate of the Placers; or, Joaquin's Death Hunt. In most Joaquin stories, Joaquin first kills each of those persons who had participated in lashing him, and in most versions we get a one-sentence or two-sentence account of some of these slayings. Then Joaquin turns to crime in general. He robs Americans of their gold and horses, and then he kills them. In the Badger story we get lengthy accounts of some of the killings that Joaquin did for revenge. At the end of the first page Joaquin severely wounded one and then removed his own beard so that his victim would recognize him as the one that the victim had lashed earlier. When the victim said that he had been killed, Joaquin answered: "As I swore I would on the day when you helped to flog me like a dog." Then "more than ever like a wild beast, with flakes of froth dropping from his lips," Joaquin said, "You are the sixth."

In the following involved series of events, we learn how Joaquin in disguise hunted down others who had lashed him. Included in the story is a series of events about two men who look identical. One is Raymon Salcedo, who had hanged Joaquin's brother mainly because he wanted the brother's wife. The other is a good man who is having problems in his love affair because he is often mistaken for Salcedo. The love affair creates situations involving his lover and her mother, who are both unlikely characters.

In most Joaquin stories there are accounts of Joaquin's often wearing disguises and not being recognized when he is in the midst of a crowd that is discussing Joaquin. In this dime novel the same theme exists. One of the more conspicuous men in the mining town is a Jewish money lender named Levi who is always around but seeming never to do anything; eventually the reader learns that he is Joaquin in disguise.

In a lengthy vivid scene Joaquin fatally shoots Saucedo who pleads "Mercy." Joaquin says that he will give 'the same degree of mercy' Saucedo had shown Joaquin's brother. The next morning a corpse was hanging on the town hall with a sign saying: "RAYMON SAUCEDO: Hung for murdering Carlos Murieta."

A week later another corpse was hanging there. The sign said: "Died for Carmela." It was the body of Camplido. Thus, Joaquin had now killed all those who had helped hang his brother or lash Joaquin at the tree. He had acquired the vengeance he sought, and then the dime novel ends.

For each of these three dime novels, Joseph Badger took a significant aspect of the Joaquin legend and instead of briefly summarizing that aspect as most versions do, gave it in detail and at greater length than the entire story of either of the first two major novels about Joaquin. But Badger did not deviate from the basic story of Joaquin. He simply kept the original account and filled in details at the beginning of the story. In doing so, he added many characters not mentioned in other versions and also many breath-taking, hair-raising encounters that are typical of dime novels of the early West.

The article is based primarily on various works about Joaquin Murieta (especially the one by John Rollin Ridge and the one in "California Police Gazette") and on the following three dime novels:

DL #154—Joaquin, The Saddle King: A Romance of Joaquin's First Fight.

DL #165—Joaquin, The Terrible: The True Story of the Three Bitter Blows That Changed an Honest Man to a Merciless Demon.

DL 201—The Pirate of the Placers; or, Joaquin's Death-Hunt.

Other Beadle dime novels dealing partly with the Joaquin story include the following ones:

DL #88—Badger, Joseph E. Big George, the Giant of the Gulch; or, The Five Outlaw Brothers. (Same as one beginning in SJ #345)

½DL #203—Badger, Joseph E. The Boy Pard; or, Dainty Lance Un-masks. (Same as PL #186; the fifth in the Dainty Lance series but the only one in it dealing with Joaquin)

DL #28—Badger, Joseph E. Three-Fingered Jack, the Road-Agent of the Rockies; or, The Boy Miner of Hard Luck. (Same as DL #1040 and one beginning in SJ #335)

NEWS NOTES

Harry L. Lane, a long time subscriber to the Dime Novel Roundup, died Jan. 18, 1987. This sad news was received from a relative. He had saved all his Roundups from 1931 and had them bound. If anyone is interested in them Shirley M. Alisch of 2753 Knollwood Drive, Mobile, Ala. 36609 should be contacted.

A new column, REPORT ON RESEARCH, will appear in the next issue of the Roundup. Anyone who is doing any research in the dime novel field is asked to send news of the research project to Lydia C. Scurman, 3215 North 22nd St., Arlington, Va. 22201-4303. She will organize the information into a column for publishing. Several of you are involved in interesting investigations the rest would like to know about. The letters can be brief; post-cards are fine. Just let us know anything you are researching and feel free to make comments about your work. We want the column to appear on a regular basis, and we hope it will enable the researchers among us to keep in closer touch, as well as letting others know about research activities that are going on in the field.

DIME NOVEL SKETCHES #227

HISTORICAL SERIES

Publisher: Street & Smith, 238 William St., New York, N. Y. Issues: 16. Schedule: Monthly. Dates: Aug. 1898 to Nov. 1899. Size: 7¼x5". Pages: 150 to 200. Price: 10c Illustrations: Designed colored pictorial cover. Contents: Biographical and historical works about places and personages of the era, mostly Spanish America War.

(Note the Historical Series is illustrated on the cover of the previous issue of the Dime Novel Roundup, Vol. 56 No. 5, October 1987, Whole No. 587.)

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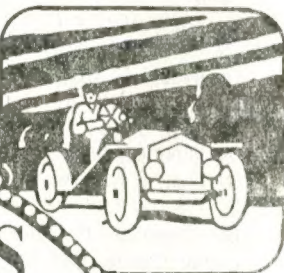
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LETTERS

Dear Ed:

I have been enjoying your S&S Bibliography. Those erratum sheets about the Gaboriau plagiarism rang a bell. In the Bookman for August 1902, Gellert Burgess interviewed Eugene Sawyer, who stated: "I Americanized one of the Nick Carters from Gaboriau in three days once . . ." (Quoted in Edmund Pearson, *DIME NOVELS*, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1924, page 212). The prolific Gaboriau seems to have been a favorite target for plagiarism.

Mike Saavedra

Dear Eddie

I received the correction to the Street & Smith Bibliography. (Correction was made to show that Mechainet, the French Detective attributed to Francis A. Durivage, was really written by Emile Gaboriau). I note with interest your remarks about Francis Alexander Durivage. There is no doubt that he was a real person. He was born in Boston in 1814, day and month unknown and died Feb. 1, 1884. He was an editor, novelist and playwright. I note in your list that the previous appearance of this story was in the New York Weekly in 1877. (Vol. 31 Nos. 48-50.) He was 63 years old at the time. It is very doubtful that he submitted this story to the weekly as in later life he devoted most of his writing to the stage. His play with Steele MacKaye was produced in 1872. He wrote most of his fiction in the early years of his career, and I believe he did not take part in the scheme to plagiarize Gaboriau's work.

There is very little biographical details about him. He used to write sketches for Turf and Field and Farm under the pseudonym "The Old 'Un." He began to contribute to the Gleason publications and then to Ballou. Ballou made him an assistant editor. He also contributed to the New York Ledger. Durivage's work seldom appeared in book form but his "Angela" was published in 1843. Elliott Thomas and Talbot published his "The Fatal Casket; or, The Poisoners of Paris" in 1866. Many others appeared in dime novel form. He died in New York City.

Stanley A. Pachon

Dear Eddie

I hope this letter makes the pages of DIME NOVEL ROUNDUP, because the news I have to impart should be of interest to those conducting research in the field of dime novel literature.

Pursuant to the short article which I submitted in the last issue of Dime Novel Roundup with regard to the MAGNET DETECTIVE LIBRARY, I decided to do some sleuthing to learn what I could about the author, Ernest A. Young, of whom very little biographical material was known. What I did know was that he was the initiator of a series of detective stories highlighting the first known fictional detective from Boston almost 100 years before Robert B. Parker's "Spenser." The detective bore the strange name of Donald Dyke. Furthermore, the detective's wife, Clarice, was featured in a story where she herself undertook a bit of detective work on her own to become one of the early fictional female detectives. All of these stories were serialized in the Boston Globe under different titles before book publication.

I had remembered reading somewhere (I believe it was in Johannsen's "House of Beadle and Adams") that Young was mentioned in a footnote as a Fitchburg, Massachusetts author. This prompted me to write to the Fitchburg Public Library for any information whatsoever.

The answer I received was that Ernest A. Young was listed in the Fitch-

burg city directories as an author from about 1889 to about 1899. After that date, there was a note to the effect that he had removed to the nearby town of Westminster and then the trail went cold.

Hardly satisfied with these results, I decided to dig further on my own. Making my way into Boston, I visited the New England Historic Genealogical Society to poke around in the city directories of other towns neighboring Fitchburg. I did manage to locate Young, first with a post-office address in the town of Templeton; then I located him residing in Hubbardston until about 1922 and the trail went cold once again. So, I wrote to the Hubbardston Historical Society for whatever information it could furnish. Nearly two months had passed and I had heard nothing. Perhaps the Hubbardston Historical Society was more of a social organization than one which conducted any sort of research service.

Then, one day at work I received a telephone call from a woman who told me she was Ernest A. Young's granddaughter. Apparently, someone at the Hubbardston Historical Society had forwarded my letter on to her. Excitedly, I asked for some biographical details which she willingly supplied. But what intrigued me most was the passing remark that she possessed her grandfather's trunk which had not been opened since his death. Could it be possible that the trunk contained diaries and manuscripts or just old underwear and socks? Gathering my wits, I hastily made an appointment to come and visit with her.

On the appointed day, I proceeded to her home. All the while, a myriad of thoughts ran through my mind in anticipation of what I might find. When I reached my destination, one can well imagine the sensations I experienced as I was led up to the attic of the granddaughter's home. There in front of me was the trunk which had been pried open the night before and its contents laid bare on the floor.

I quickly made mental notes of all that my eyes could scrutinize. There were bundles of envelopes. Some of them were family correspondence; some were correspondence from publishing houses, as well as some from other dime novel authors. There were a few diaries; business account books, which contained notations of sales to various publishers; lists of works published by Ernest A. Young under a variety of pseudonyms and house names; plenty of manuscripts and other personal material. I was totally flabbergasted, to say the least. I had located a veritable researcher's dream.

The granddaughter granted me the privilege of taking most of the material home to organize (that is, all the literary material). Hopefully, once organized, the material will help to resurrect Ernest A. Young from oblivion and present him as a leading proponent of American popular literature.

So, as time goes by, I shall be communicating with you and sharing these finds with the readers of Dime Novel Roundup.

Sincerely, Victor A. Berch

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